

4701 Sangamore Road
Bethesda, Maryland 20016
May 12, 1981

Robert P. Hilt, II
Post Office Box 988 D.T.S.
Omaha, Nebraska 68101

Dear Mr. Hilt,

Thank you for sending Vol. I of DIE VARIETY OF EARLY UNITED STATES COINS. As per your invoice I enclose check for \$45.

I have read your letter as well as the book in the 48 hours since it arrived. I could write a long long letter !! and perhaps I will do so now, so bear with me. First of all let me start with your book.

I consider your work a first rate contribution to the unfolding body of knowledge about early US coinage which has been so long in coming. There are many reasons for the slowness of the publication of this knowledge. It is obvious to me that you did your work with no help from the person who for the last 30 years has tried to hold on to the information. I am of course referring to Walter Breen. I have known Walter for 30 years and there is so much I could write about him and his henchmen and his methods, I could turn out a 20 page booklet.

It is obvious to me that you are not familiar with my book AMERICAN HALF
→ CNETS which I published in 1971, should you wish I can supply you with one. In my book I set forth most of the ideas which you set forth in your book. I waited for 20 years for Walter Breen to turn out his book on half cents. I finally got tired of waiting and did it myself. Living in Washington, D.C. (Bethesda is a suburb), I spent considerable time in the National Archives. I went over most everything I could get my hands on. I used this material as it related to half cents. There was a great deal on the precious metals and your work combined with that of Bob Julian, who I know slightly, certainly seem to tell their story. Copper coinage while at first similar to precious metals (the making of planchets), quickly changed to a process of just stamping purchased planchets. Thus your single press emission sequence theory will not work for copper. Your die group theory will not work on half cents simply because the engraving department never finished in 1795, 1796, and 1797. Like I said I could write more and more, perhaps in later correspondence. Again I strongly recommend that you read my book as most of the "organization and methods" which I did were based on archives material. I found myself at odds with Walter Breen over many things from the archives.

P. 218

Robert P. Hilt, II
May 12, 1981
page 2

While I read your book I noted certain things which I will set forth.

1) On your "conversion table for die variety reference work" you note that Sanford J. Durst published a book in 1925 on early quarter dollars. Is this an error on your part or did that sleazy s.o.b. Durst put his name on Brownings work? I don't have a copy as I am boycotting Durst both as to purchases by me and sales of my book to him.

2) The "Sheldon rarity scale" which you give in your forward is not Sheldon's original scale. The scale you have used is one that first appeared in Dr. Judd's book on patterns. This scale was dreamed up by Walter Breen to overemphasize rarity. This is a matter of personal preference, but I prefer Sheldon's original scale.

3) On page 1, you refer to the nation's capitol, the spelling is capit a l - capit o l refers to the building. This is easy for one who has lived in the nations capital all his life and has seen the capitol many times.

4) Plate opposite page 2. The engraver is Henry not John.

5) The 1793 half cent you illustrate (variety #4) was probably engraved as you state by Adam Echfeld. However, the first abbese die (varieties 1 & 2) was ~~pre-~~ ^{probably} done by Joseph Wright. This is some new data I have come up with and is too long to write out for now.

6) Your footnote for Penny Whimsy carries the publisher and date of Sheldon's earlier and better work EARLY AMERICAN CENTS. The biggest fault of Penny Whimsy is that Walter Breen is ~~carried~~ as a co-author and had succeeded in bullshitting Sheldon on the rarity of many cents - enough of this for now.

7) I enjoyed your blast at Breen over the "yellow fever emergency" on page 6. My book is full of this type of thing only I am a little more charitable than you in the choice of my language.

8) On pages 11 - 14, you set forth what I call the single press emission theory. In the case of precious metals it works!! But, on copper it does not!! You should carefully review my book as to why not! I also note that you are not a slave to the "date emission sequence" which many former writers have been. In my book I arranged my chapters by date solely due to the fact that to depart from this would have been too much of a shock for most "numismatists".

9) On page 15 - you get into specific coins and I must admit I know nothing of the die variety of silver and gold. I only have a type set for these. However, your concepts are first rate and I can only assume you are correct in your die chains.

10) Why do I have a blank page opposite page 33?

11) On page 34, you refer to Lester Merkins sale of September 18, 1968. I happen to have the catalog due to the half cents it contained - mostly Richard Pickers.- For your information the author of the catalog was none other than Walter Breen who was working for penny wages for Merkin at that time.

Robert P. Hilt, II
May 12, 1981
page 3

12) On page 59, the letter of Rittenhouse I had not seen before. It has a note of interest to a copper freak like me in the last paragraph and ties to my observations.

13) On page 109 I enjoyed your discussion of assay coins. Do you believe that any copper coins were preserved this way?

Well, it has taken me 2½ hours to write this so I close for now. I would like to hear from you.

Sincerely,

Roger S. Cohen, Jr.

P. S. Your mention of Don Tokeys book "The US Mint and Coinage" brings to mind the fact that Mr. Tokey obtained the majority of his information from Walter Breen. For many years Breen was his lord and master - they are bitter enemies now.



HILT *Truck Line, Inc.*

P. O. BOX 988 D.T.S. / OMAHA, NEBRASKA 68101 / 712-328-2393

Dear Roger

Richard Shimkus asked me to send you a book. Invoice enclosed. I originally sold about 200 books at \$75⁰⁰ each and when it appeared that I was going to recover my expenses in having it manufactured, I lowered the price to \$45⁰⁰. I sent the first 200 buyers a refund of \$30⁰⁰. At present I have sold almost 300 copies and I estimate about 600 sales will bring the book to break even. I would certainly appreciate any help you could provide in publicity to other variety collectors.

With your considerable expertise in early die variety coins I would certainly enjoy obtaining your opinion of my work.

Volume II will cover 1798 through 1807 for the silver and gold denominations and Volume III will cover the copper coinage from 1793 through 1807. For your information the Grove strength for half cents after 1793 (ie 1794 through 1797) was 5 sets of dies.

On page 44 the 3-A half dollar variety should
read 2250 minted and 30 coins presently ^{extant} ~~extant~~.

Respectfully yours

Robert P. Hill II